

DE LAVAN (D.B.)

THE PRESIDENT'S ADDRESS

DELIVERED BEFORE
THE AMERICAN LARYNGOLOGICAL ASSOCIATION
AT ITS SIXTEENTH ANNUAL CONGRESS

BY

D. BRYSON DELAVAN, M. D.

REPRINTED FROM
THE NEW YORK MEDICAL JOURNAL FOR AUGUST 13, 1894



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FELLOWS OF THE AMERICAN LARYNGOLOGICAL ASSOCIATION: In opening our sixteenth annual congress, let me heartily welcome you to what gives every promise of being a most useful and enjoyable meeting. The support which you have given it, both by your presence and by the scientific contributions provided, has been spirited and generous, and I am assured that you will still further co-operate with me in carrying it through to a harmonious and successful close.

As president, the option is accorded me of inaugurating our exercises with the time-honored ceremony of a presidential address. While some have held the value of this in question, I believe that such an address should be considered, in like manner with our annual dinner, as a very desirable, if not an indispensable, part of each yearly gathering, affording as it does an opportunity to call attention to ideas and suggestions of timely interest which could hardly otherwise be presented, and to record and study events of historic value in the career of the association.

Surely the experience gained in sixteen years should give light enough to illuminate for us the present and enable us to look forward somewhat into the future. In trying to forecast the future, too, it is eminently right that we should indulge in retrospect, particularly for the benefit of any who may but recently have come among us and to whom our early history may be unknown. I shall aim, therefore, to go backward with you over the life of the association, review the means by which it has attained its ends, estimate fairly its present standing, and, finally, study the methods by which its mission of usefulness for the future may be most surely and successfully accomplished. In doing this I trust that

our older members may be stimulated by the story of their success, and our younger ones made to realize the full meaning and value of their admission into what has rightly become to its fellows an honored and cherished institution.

The history of our association is almost the history of laryngology, not only in this country, but in the world, for Manuel Garcia, the discoverer of the laryngoscope, is still living and one of our honorary members, while the list of our corresponding fellows has contained the names of the most distinguished specialists of the time. It must always be a cause of regret that Horace Green, our thrice distinguished countryman, should have ended his invaluable labors before this association came into existence. As the pioneer specialist in diseases of the throat, his works now prove that he led the world, along a path indeed made rough and thorny by those who should have been his aids. Between the dark age in which he struggled and the brilliant era ushered in by Czermak, how great a change! Then, blind groping after truth; now, learning guided by the electric light of modern scientific methods. Then, ignorance, opposition, misrepresentation; now, an acknowledged department of science, recognized and honored wherever known. Then, practically in the grasp of one man; now, universal. Truly, our earliest motto was well chosen—" *E tenebris lux.*"

According to Elsberg, the laryngoscope was first introduced into this country in 1860. By 1878 its use was being taught in twenty-five different institutions, and the specialty had gained a position of acknowledged respectability. Elsberg, eminently qualified for such a task, has given a complete history of the study of disease of the throat in this country, which those who own the first volume of our *Transactions* will find a most interesting record. In the same essay also he pointed out the rare possibilities of usefulness which lay in the path of our then youthful association, the birth of which had taken place but a year before. Concerning this happy event, let me refresh your memories by recalling the fact that the inaugural meeting of the American Laryngological Association was held in Buffalo on the 3d of June, 1878, in response to an invitation by Dr. Frank H. Davis, of Chicago, issued on May 10, 1878, to the following-named gentlemen: Dr. J. Solis-Cohen, Dr. Carl Seiler, Philadelphia; Dr. Clinton Wagner, Dr. George M. Lefferts, Dr. Louis Elsberg, Dr. Beverley Robinson, New York; Dr. Frank Donaldson, Dr. J. H. Hartman, Dr. Samuel Johnston, Baltimore; Dr. Frederick I. Knight, Dr. E. Cutter, Boston; Dr. E. L. Shurly, De-

troit; Dr. William C. Glasgow, Dr. William Porter, Dr. Thomas F. Rumbold, St. Louis; Dr. Hosmer A. Johnson, Dr. E. Fletcher Ingals, Dr. M. Monnheim, Chicago. These gentlemen, together with Dr. Rufus P. Lincoln and Dr. F. H. Bosworth, of New York, met together, as above stated, for the purpose of forming a national association for the advancement of laryngology. Very justly, therefore, they should be considered the founders of this organization. From the minutes of this first meeting we learn that it was called to order by Dr. Lefferts, who acted as secretary, and that Dr. F. H. Davis occupied the chair. Dr. Louis Elsberg, in his inaugural remarks as first president, re-echoed the experience of Horace Green when, in speaking of his own twenty years of special labor, he said: "The road has been a rugged one, and few of you can realize today the uphill work, the obstacles, and obloquy encountered." And then, in the spirit of the true enthusiast that he was, he quickly adds: "In the pursuit of our specialty I have found much happiness, reward for all endeavor, satisfaction from consciousness of good work done, gratitude from patients, recognition from the profession, and altogether greater success, perhaps, than I have deserved." It was right that Elsberg should have been the association's first president. Holding that office for two successive terms, he gave in his inaugural addresses the principles upon which the society has since been conducted, with a degree of success which would argue ill for any serious departure that might in future be made from them.

The motives which actuated the leaders in the founding of our society were eminently philanthropic, noble, and ambitious. No one can question that these were exemplified so clearly and forcibly by the four distinguished men who first presided over us that we need never think of failure as long as the ideas which they advanced continue to be kept in view. Their organization of the society was a preconceived movement in the direction of a higher and broader education; an intelligent, vigorous effort to advance and disseminate the knowledge of our special work. By means of its annual meetings, by the publication of its transactions, by the encouragement of the special literature of our department, both scientific and critical, by the bringing forward of youthful aspirants for laryngological fame, and, finally, by the study and practice of the best methods of instruction in our medical schools, it was hoped that the association might attain usefulness in no ordinary degree. How well these hopes have been realized will shortly appear.

Never since its formation has the association failed to hold its regular annual congress at the time and place formally agreed upon. Its meetings invariably have been well attended, both by its older and younger members. Every year new contributions, often of great scientific value, have been presented. The discussions have been remarkably full, original, and helpful. Indeed, if there is one thing to which we can point with just pride, it is the tangible essence of these meetings represented by our published *Transactions*. Fifteen volumes, models of excellence in all that goes to make a perfect book, each one in itself sufficient to form a most worthy monument to the genius, the devotion, and the progressive spirit of the society, have gradually accumulated upon our shelves. According to the published records and to the programme now before us, original articles have been contributed since the beginning of the society to the number of more than three hundred and thirty, a large proportion of which have been of unusual value. Comparing these papers with the best that the world has produced, they will be found to be scholarly, accurate, and exhaustive, while, scientifically speaking, many of them are historic, marking, as they do, the original discovery of important scientific facts, and in some instances inaugurating new eras in the departments of which they treat. The foreign relations of the association have always been intimate and agreeable, and there has never been a congress of any note in which it has not been ably represented.

Our association is intimately related also to another important educational factor. In the department of journalism its history has been honorably associated with the progress of the special literature of our department. As showing the advances made since our beginning, all of this, with the exception of the laryngological department of the *Monatsschrift für Ohrenheilkunde*, first edited by Professor Schrötter, of Vienna, and *Les annales des maladies*, etc., founded in Paris by Isambert, Krishaber, and Lacharrière, just twenty years ago, have been started since 1878.

A glance at them reveals an array of magazines which represent many languages, and which, in literary style and scientific excellence, are a credit to laryngology. These journals may be divided into two classes: those which devote themselves especially or in part to the publication of original matter, and those which merely pretend to give a critical synopsis of the current literature of the specialty. Of the journals of the first class, none has played a more important part or attained a higher plane of excellence than did the *Archives of*

Laryngology, founded in 1878 by our fellow-members, Dr. Knight, Dr. Cohen, Dr. Elsberg, and Dr. Lefferts, and by them so conducted as to have made the magazine a model guide for the future management of such enterprises. One valuable feature of it may have escaped your attention—namely, its biographical records, which form an important link in the following chain :

As a part of his inaugural address, the late Dr. Elsberg presented to this society a complete bibliography of laryngology up to the year 1878. The work of recording the current literature of the day had already been undertaken by Lefferts, who, beginning in 1875, published quarterly in the *New York Medical Journal* a carefully prepared digest and complete bibliography of the subject, and transferred his reports to the *Archives of Laryngology* when that journal was started in 1880. Here they were continued, to be taken up and carried onward by other magazines, now easily accessible to all, up to the present time. To Dr. Lefferts, therefore, belongs pre-eminently the credit of this most helpful contribution, which, long antedating the *Index Medicus*, will be appreciated by every one of us who attempts to study or to write in this department, and which, combined with the bibliography given in the work of Sir Morell Mackenzie, presents the completest available record of the special literature of our subject.

Of the journals now in existence, that which is the oldest still continues to be one of the foremost and best, and the editors of the *Les annales* may look with well-earned satisfaction upon the twenty splendid volumes with which their labors have been rewarded. No journal since the death of the *Archives* has filled more acceptably a place of higher usefulness than the present *Journal of Laryngology*, founded by Sir Morell Mackenzie, and a worthy monument to him. By the English-speaking contingent, who are able to appreciate its value and compare it with others of its kind, it will easily be accorded the highest rank.

Turning from the department of journalism to that of book making, what changes have taken place with us since the days of Beunati and Horace Green! While a literature of extraordinary proportions has been steadily accumulating in this country, it may at present be said that the standard literature of laryngology began with Solis Cohen in 1879 and ended with Bosworth in 1892.

Last and best of all, the influence of the association upon its active fellows has been stimulating and salutary. All will readily

admit this, while there are some among us to whom it has been a veritable inspiration.

Thus the American Laryngological Association, completely successful from its inception, has steadily advanced upon the even tenor of its way, each year adding to its usefulness, its influence, and its reputation.

Meanwhile, as compared with ours, what has been the progress of the outside world in this direction? The story of foreign national associations is briefly told. While there are various local societies and sections of laryngology, national associations have, until very lately, been unknown; now, however, their value is beginning to be recognized. First in the order of priority is the British Laryngological and Rhinological Association, founded in 1888 by that greatest of laryngologists, Sir Morell Mackenzie, ten years after the first meeting of our association. In 1890 successful associations were begun in France and in Belgium, in 1892 one in Italy, and, most recent of all, the Laryngological Association of Holland was started in 1893 with an active membership of twenty-five. Scandinavia, Russia, Germany, Austria, and Spain are as yet unrepresented. The American Laryngological Association, therefore, is nearly as old as all other similar associations combined. The fact that others are following its example proves that the ideas it has implanted, although slow in being accepted, are at last beginning to bear fruit.

But while upon the subject of such organized work in laryngology, it would not be fair to pass without notice the numerous local societies and special sections of large general medical bodies which have been formed for the advancement of our specialty. Indeed, here again America may claim priority, for five years before our national association was started there was organized, at the suggestion of Dr. Clinton Wagner, the Laryngological Society of New York. The story of its founding is worthy of your hearing, as it bears directly upon the subject of our discourse. It is herewith given in the words of Dr. Wagner himself:

"In the autumn of 1873, appreciating the advantage to be derived from a society for the consideration of laryngological work, I wrote to a number of men, many of whom had studied diseases of the throat in Vienna and elsewhere and who held positions at throat clinics in this city, requesting them to meet at my residence for the purpose of organizing such a society. Early in October, 1873—I can not remember the exact date—the following responded to the

invitation: Dr. G. M. Lefferts, Dr. Woolsey Johnson, Dr. Charles McBurney, Dr. F. H. Bosworth, Dr. M. J. Asch, Dr. M. D. Mann, Dr. F. P. Kinnicutt, and Dr. H. Bridge. The New York Laryngological Society was then organized, having for its object the 'promotion of the study of diseases of the larynx, pharynx, and adjacent parts.'

"Dr. McBurney and I were appointed to draw up the by-laws. A large number of new members were shortly afterward admitted. The society flourished until the American Laryngological Association appeared, and later on, when the Laryngological Section of the New York Academy of Medicine was established, it was merged into it.

"It was the *first* society devoted exclusively to laryngology and rhinology established either in this country or in Europe. At Buffalo, in June, 1878, four members of the New York Laryngological Society—viz., Lefferts, Bosworth, Elsberg, and myself—took part in founding the American Laryngological Association; we were the only New Yorkers present.

"In the obituary notice of my friend, Dr. Elsberg, which appeared in the New York *Medical Record*, it was stated that he had founded the New York Laryngological Society. I am quite sure that Elsberg never said anything to create such an impression.

"As a matter of fact, Dr. Elsberg did not join the society until 1875 or 1876—I think the latter date.

"I have not written this to detract in any way from the well-earned laurels of my friend Elsberg, and at the time of the publication of the notice I, of course, said nothing. I furnish the information now at your request to aid you in putting facts on 'permanent record.'

Very truly yours,

"CLINTON WAGNER."

The Section in Laryngology and Rhinology of the New York Academy of Medicine now numbers more than sixty active members, its monthly meetings are fully attended, and its scientific work is of a high order.

Within the last few years a great change has come about. All over Europe signs of increased interest have become manifest in the rapid increase of these special societies. Thus highly successful local societies have been started in London, Berlin, and other centers. The latest report is that one has been formed in Budapest. Existing national societies and the special laryngological sections of general bodies, such as the Laryngological Section of the

British Medical Association, the Laryngo-rhinological Section of the German *Naturforscherversammlung*, and the Laryngological Section of the American Medical Association, are all progressively more active; new societies, sections, and associations are rapidly being formed, and everywhere a spirit of progress is showing itself most gratifying to such as have the advancement of science truly at heart.

The effect of centralized effort of that healthful competition which is the inevitable and invaluable result of the free intercourse and friendly rivalry made possible by these societies has nowhere shown its influence more potently or with more gratifying results than in England, where lately the study of laryngology has been advanced with the energy and enthusiasm of a genuine renaissance. Wherever successful associations have been established, their influence has been invariably elevating and inspiring, as shown in the improved quality and amount of the scientific work done and in the general tendency toward the attainment of higher planes of professional education and culture.

It is indeed a satisfaction that this strong onward movement should have been headed, and at so great a distance in advance, by this country, and it is surely not unpardonable that we should express ourselves as the occasion warrants. In the midst of these self-congratulations, however, let us not for a moment be deceived or carried away.

Far from arousing other feelings than those of humility, let us remember that the success attained, the honorable place fairly and honorably won, the flattery of delayed but now widespread imitation—all impose added responsibility and weightier obligation. To be an example to the world, we must strive for superiority. Nay, even if we are to hold the place which has been won, it must be through increased diligence in our own work, and an ever-broadening receptivity to the ideas of others.

Having thus suggested a few points in the history of the association, let us study out, if possible, what has been its most important function in the past and wherein lie its greatest possibilities of usefulness for the future. Unquestionably, the keynote of the whole matter was struck by our first secretary when he selected as the motto for our programme the words "*Docendo discimus*"—By teaching we learn. If the association is to attain and to maintain the highest place, it must itself be the exemplar and the guide; and, first qualifying itself by absolute purity of purpose, oneness of aim, and actual scientific superiority, then proceed to study and to

carry out such plans for the advancement of the specialty as shall place the greatest amount of sound learning in the hands of the largest number of well-qualified men. The question of education, in other words, is vastly the most important, the most interesting, and the most opportune by which our attention could possibly be engaged. In it lies the hope of the future, both as to our own reputations and, what is of far more importance, as to the beneficent ends to which we fondly hope that our specialty may attain. This, in the origin of our association, was its grand, primal idea, inculcated first and last by the ablest and wisest of its founders, and interwoven by them into its very existence and being. Does one doubt this, let him read the enthusiastic addresses of our first president, Dr. Elsberg, the admirable thesis upon this very topic by our second president, Dr. Knight, and the more recent remarks of Dr. Glasgow; let him consider the unflagging enthusiasm, both in precept and example, of such men as Cohen, Lefferts, Shurly, French, Ingals, Mackenzie, and others of our older members, and he will see the truth more clearly than words of mine can tell it. Teaching has been and always will be the society's most important office. It is, in very truth, a teacher of teachers, and as such should not alone confine itself to the advancement of laryngological science through the influence which it has had upon the establishment of other societies, the fostering of good journalism, and the encouragement of original scientific work. The science of pedagogy, in so far as it relates to our own department, is a topic which should engage our most serious attention. The very fact that the leading teachers of the country are our fellow-members imposes upon the association an obligation to the profession at large which can not be underrated, still less set aside.

Starting, then, with the excellent beginnings made by the writers already mentioned, it is not strange that undergraduate teaching should have reached with us a high degree of perfection. Indeed the plan of instruction, the equipment, and the general discipline of at least one of our leading medical colleges is of conceded superiority and stands unrivaled whether at home or abroad. Other schools in many different parts of the United States are doing good work. The question of the instruction of the undergraduate in this department, therefore, may be said to have been fairly considered and successfully met.

With the progress of time, however, new and strange necessities have arisen among us, and within ten years there has been inau-

gured in this country one of the most significant and wonderful advances that the history of medicine has ever seen. The failure of the undergraduate medical school to answer all of the needs of the higher medical education has been acknowledged and a new era has been ushered in by the establishment of institutions for the special instruction of graduates.

This movement, together with the vast increase in the literature of the department, has given to laryngology an almost startling popularity. All over the country the extension of laryngology, or, more correctly speaking, the multiplication of the number of practitioners who assume to treat diseases of the throat, has been enormous and has called loudly for increased and improved facilities for instruction. This want, so urgent and at the same time so creditable, has been met by the system of the graduate school. Beginning in New York, the value of the work has been speedily appreciated by the whole country, and not only are the original schools crowded with students from all over the continent, but in many other cities similar institutions have been established, until to-day Boston, Philadelphia, Baltimore, Cincinnati, Chicago, St. Louis, and San Francisco are provided for and new ones are springing up all over the country. Those of us who have been for years personally engaged in this most interesting field of labor have realized the intense zeal and devotion shown by our pupils, who, representing every section of our country, every possible grade of intelligence and education, and every conceivable variety of personal need, have come to us for such instruction as we, on the one hand, have been able to give them, and as they themselves, on the other hand, have been able to receive.

Dealing with such men, the problem of their education becomes to us the most important one of the day. The undergraduate question is much more easily solved, as between him and the graduate the case in our department is very different, undergraduates being, as a class, of about the same age, general training, and advancement in their medical education, and each individual requiring about the same courses of instruction to introduce him fairly to our science. With the graduate student, as has already been suggested, the case is very different, in that a vastly greater variety of personal needs must be met.

To satisfy the diversified necessities of these students imposes upon the graduate director a weighty task. The theory of graduate instruction in this country is an established and triumphant success.

The popularity of the demand for it is beyond question. How, then, can we best attain the practical ends required by it? How can we best infuse the ferment of sound learning into this unleavened but well promising mass?

If called upon to name the most important factors in the improvement of graduate instruction, the unhesitating answer would be—

I. A higher and more thorough general medical education on the part of the student.

II. The most careful selection in the choice of instructors.

III. A modification of the best undergraduate methods, to suit the needs of the older men.

IV. The more general recognition of the value of graduate schools to the physician, and hence to the public at large, and of the importance of so endowing them that they may be able to perform the most extensive and efficient service to their pupils with the least amount of difficulty to their instructors.

The second consideration mentioned above is one of great importance, and we should endeavor to fill each teaching position under us with men who are both able and willing to acquire the necessary preparation and then to teach for teaching's sake—for the advancement of sound learning rather than for that of self.

As to the student himself, he must be impressed with the real gravity of the task which he has undertaken. It is unfair to allow him to believe that he can learn the whole subject in a short course of study, or to underrate to him the difficulties of special operations. In short, he must have placed before him, truthfully and fairly, as well the difficulties of our work as its successes. He must know that before he can be a surgeon he must be an anatomist, and before a special surgeon, at least a fairly qualified general one. He must be taught not alone from the book, but from the living experience of skilled, well-grounded, wise instructors, who, under the general guidance of the chief professor, shall start him upon the right path and lead him as far as his time and his capabilities will permit him to go. And, last of all, when he has read his books, learned the use of his instruments, and attended for as long as possible the daily clinic of some good man, he must realize that to the attainment of the highest skill he must devote the unremitting labor of years. Thus may be fulfilled to the utmost what has been defined as the vocation of the specialist—namely, to make discoveries and then to give them to the world. In no department has this already been

done more loyally or at greater personal sacrifice than in laryngology.

Ever mindful of its obligation to the world at large, may it never happen that our association shall fail to hold in remembrance its duty to itself. While its future is full of promise, it is also not devoid of possible dangers. Lack of interest on the part of the older members, the multiplication of other societies, and, finally, those two elements which are the greatest bane of association work, namely, the introduction of society politics and the inordinate desire for self-aggrandizement—pecuniary and social—all of these may hover over the future of any organization, ready to confront it with deadly peril.

As to our founders, their lively interest in all that pertains to our success eloquently proves that their loyalty is as strong to-day as was their faith in '78.

With regard to the multiplication of special sections and societies, the more good ones we can have, the better. Than through them there is no surer way to stimulate interest and advance learning. To them we must look for the development of our own future members. The national association has thus far easily maintained the leading place; this will continue as long as we insist upon selecting as our fellow-members none but men of high principle and liberal education, who will fully appreciate the aims of the association and contribute to it their best work. Indeed, the recognition of merit and the encouragement of the best young element have from the very first been insisted upon by the society quite as emphatically as the suppression of charlatanism or the unmasking of pretense. As to the last-named evils, the surest guarantee for the future will be adherence to the high principles which have actuated the past.

And now a word as to ourselves, and I close. Since this society was formed, laryngology has undergone a revolution. Then it was in the hands of a few men, who, under the stimulating influence of the earliest enthusiasts, formed a veritable aristocracy of learning. All this has been changed; where lately our association represented not only the best but the most of laryngology in this country, its devotees may now be numbered by thousands. A spirit of liberality has been among us, a veritable socialism of science, which, having acquired a rich and rare possession, seeks not to hoard it for itself but to spread it broadcast and with lavish hand to the remotest corners of the world. True, such leveling can not take place without

danger of loss. If in this vast extension of knowledge our standards of excellence are to be lowered, and work, not of the worthiest, accepted at equal value with the best, the results will be disastrous to humanity and to the true advance of science. Such a calamity, however, I am unable to foresee. The outside competition which is crowding in upon us will only stimulate to higher attainment and greater skill, while from this vast body of new aspirants must arise men who will carry still farther upward and forward the light of truth for the illumination of those hidden mysteries which it has not as yet been our good fortune to see revealed. With the progress of the present day this society is responsible in no ordinary degree. Nurtured by ardent toil, enthusiastic interest, and no little self-sacrifice, the fate of the American Laryngological Association is in your hands. See to it that the future shall secure, so far as in you lies, the rich fulfillment of the hopes of those who gave it to you.

It is wrong that your patience should be longer trespassed upon. What has been said, although so imperfectly, may, I hope, be of interest and help to some. It implies congratulations to you for the association's successful past, with ardent hope and abiding faith for its ever brighter and increasingly prosperous career in time to come.

